

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING



PUBLIC SPACE APPLICATION REVIEW

DATE: August 9, 2010
FROM: Joshua Ghaffari, Citywide Planner
ADDRESS: 746 6th Street NW
APPLICATION: Unenclosed sidewalk café for 2 tables and 7 seats

Site Information

Zone: DD/C-4
Historic District: Downtown Historic District
CFA: No
Neighborhood Character: Downtown commercial district

Background:

This application was received by the Office of Planning on August 3, 2010. The proposed café has been reviewed and approved by historic preservation office staff on. This café is for an adjacent restaurant.

Relevant Policies of Planning Initiatives

Policy T-2.4.4: Sidewalk Obstructions

Locate sidewalk cafes and other intrusions into the sidewalk so that they do not present impediments to safe and efficient pedestrian passage. Maintain sidewalk surfaces and elevations so that disabled or elderly pedestrians can safely use them. 410.8

Policy UD-3.1.8: Neighborhood Public Space

Provide urban squares, public plazas, and similar areas that stimulate vibrant pedestrian street life and provide a focus for community activities. Encourage the “activation” of such spaces through the design of adjacent structures; for example, through the location of shop entrances, window displays, awnings, and outdoor dining areas.

Policy UD-3.10: Sidewalk Cafes

Discourage the enclosure of sidewalk cafes in manner that effectively transforms them into indoor floor space. The design of sidewalk cafes should be compatible with the architectural qualities of the adjoining buildings, should complement the street environment, and should not impede pedestrian movement.

KEY ISSUES

The property is located in the Chinatown neighborhood on 6th Street, NW, between G and H Streets, NW. It is located in an area zoned DD/C-4. There is a high level of pedestrian activity during working hours and at other times. This neighborhood is predominantly characterized as commercial.

The sidewalk where the café is proposed is located along 6th Street and is 21 feet wide. The adjacent business has no shop window projection. There are 4 feet at the curb set aside for tree

boxes and other street furniture. This leaves 17 feet to accommodate for pedestrians and café seating. The proposed seating area includes 2 tables and 7 seats in an area that is 90 square feet.

The café area extends into the sidewalk 9 feet. This leaves 8 feet of unobstructed sidewalk between the café and the 4 foot furniture zone at the curb. District regulations require a 10' clear pedestrian path adjacent to a sidewalk café. This is particularly important in the Downtown commercial district. However, this block has an established building yard line that demarks an established sidewalk width of 8'.

The Public Space Committee requires that there be 15 square feet for every seat within a dining area. With an area of 90 square feet, this sidewalk café has enough space for 6 seats; the application is for 7 seats. There is a broader Public Space initiative underway in Chinatown that is encouraging the activation of public space, including promoting additional seating at the curb. This may be an option for expanding seating at this site.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

Sidewalk cafes are one of the few ways that the District can activate public space in commercial areas. Wherever possible, the Office of Planning supports sidewalk cafes in public space.

The Office of Planning recommends that this application be approved with the condition that the number of seats be reduced to a maximum of 6.